

COMMITTEE ON THE AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION

to the

CULTURE AND HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY

The last meeting of the Committee on the Afro-American Contribution to the Culture and History of New Jersey for the year 1969-70 was held at the New Jersey Historical Society on Saturday morning, June 13, 1970 with Mrs. Vera B. McMillon presiding.

Since the minutes of the April meeting were distributed to members present in mimeographed form, reading of the minutes was omitted and a brief oral summary was presented on recommendations made at the January and April meetings and action taken on these recommendations.

In connection with these recommendations, Mrs. May reported that the New Jersey Historical Society Library has a partial file of the Tuesday Magazine, the gift of a former member of the staff of the Society who is also a member of the Women's branch of the Society. Mrs. May has written to the publisher of the Tuesday magazine in Chicago to inquire about the possibility of subscribing to the magazine direct.

In response to the request that the society get in touch with the Newark Superintendent of Schools in order that Mrs. McMillon be invited to speak to a regular meeting of the administrative heads of the Newark public schools about our committee, Mr. Lunny reported through Miss Studley that he had talked with the Superintendent's office on the telephone and that Mr. Titus' Secretary would see that Mr. Pfeffer contacted Mrs. McMillon in the Fall.

As an election of officers was necessary for the year 1970-71, Mrs. McMillon appointed the following nominating committee to draw up a slate of officers, Mr. Jack Brown and Dr. Alma Flagg.

Mr. Brown as chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers for the year 1970-71:

Chairman - Mrs. Vera Brantley McMillon
Vice-Chairman - Rev. Homer J. Tucker
Chairman of the Advisory Committee - Mr. Howard Caesar
Recording Secretary - Dr. Alma Flagg

The Committee report was accepted. It was regularly moved and seconded that the secretary cast one vote for the 1970-71 slate of officers. Motion was passed. Since Dr. Flagg expected to leave shortly for several weeks study at the University of Syracuse, Miss Studley agreed to act as Secretary to record the minutes of the June 13th meeting, and to turn over all records to Dr. Flagg in the Fall.

Mrs. McMillon then called for Committee Reports. Mr. Caesar reported for the Advisory Committee on appeals for funds. The appeal of the New Jersey Historical Society to the Victoria Foundation for \$25,000 to carry out the plans of the Committee on the Afro-American Contribution to the Culture and History of New Jersey was rejected. Mr. Caesar hopes that it will be possible to reapply to the Victoria Foundation. Mr. Caesar also hopes that it may be possible to take action on other proposals drawn up by the Advisory Committee, three of which he described at the April 18th meeting of the General Committee. Mr. Caesar also stated that the Advisory Committee hoped that business and industrial concerns in New Jersey might be contacted.

Since Mrs. McMillon had announced that the Education Committee would fill the last spot on the agenda with its special program, she summarized briefly the purposes of other committees. These are chiefly to do research and to collect and to preserve all available source materials on black history in New Jersey. She announced that committees would continue to meet during the summer.

Mrs. McMillon took the opportunity to present Miss Joan Hull, assistant director of the New Jersey Historical Society and director of the Society's Jerseyman program for junior historians with which the Education Committee of the Afro-American Committee has been working. Mrs. McMillon then introduced Jerseyman Club of Weequahic High School whose members had arranged the fine exhibits on display in the Society auditorium. She also introduced two young ladies visitors from South Side High School, Gloria Reeves and Della Moses, also Brenda Burt a young staff member of the New Jersey Historical Society who is also a member of the Afro-American Committee.

Afro-American Committee. - June 13, 1970

Mrs. McMillon then turned the meeting over to Mrs. Devator Hooks who presided over the program planned and arranged by the Weequahic Jerseymen.

Mrs. Hooks reported that the Weequahic Jerseymen club has a membership of thirty-one students. They prepared exhibit material of their own on black history and black leaders and also installed the very effective exhibit of art work reflecting Afro-American life and history created by Weequahic high school students. She expressed the gratitude of the Weequahic Jerseymen to Miss Caldwell and Mrs. Thomas of the staff of the art department at Weequahic High School for allowing them to bring a part of the school's exhibition prepared for Negro History Week to the New Jersey Historical Society.

Mrs. Hooks reported on the activities of the Weequahic Jerseymen who have met every Wednesday, since March, 1970. Mr. William Ashby, Mrs. McMillon, Miss Hull and Mr. Caesar have all spoken to the Weequahic Jerseymen; Mr. Caesar has assisted in fund raising and with general suggestions for the conduct of the club. Mr. Florian Jenkins, head of the Mid-Block Art Service, gave them a slide presentation. Mr. Queen, Editor of the Afro-American newspaper spoke to them, as well as Dr. Clifford Davis, the proprietor of a black-owned chemical laboratory at Red Bank. On a trip to the Newark Public Library, they visited the New Jersey Division, where they heard from Mr. Charles Cummings, head of the division and Mrs. Mildred Lipscombe, Senior Reference Librarian in the Education Division. Mrs. Hooks directed attention to the results of the research of the students at the Newark Public Library in the essays and other materials exhibited at our meeting. She thanked Mr. Cummings for arranging the library visit and for his assistance.

Mrs. Hooks also reported on the election of officers of the Weequahic Jerseymen. They are as follows:

President - Sylvia Daniels
Secretary -
Public Relations Officer - Mr. Carl Johnson.

Next year they will need to elect a Vice-President as this year's vice-president Gail Rodgers, is now a senior.

Mrs. Hooks discussed briefly plans for the school year 1970-71. Two members of the Weequahic Jerseymen, Alphonso Reynolds and Arthur Kennedy, although graduating in June, 1970, will continue to work with the club as they will be studying in the Newark area. Dr. Flagg has loaned the Jerseymen her complete set of issues of the Tuesday magazine, and the group will continue to rely on her for information. Mrs. Zelma M. Collins, a member of the Education Committee is also assisting the students, and has helped them with the preparation of their exhibit which shows their accomplishments from March to June.

Reporting on finances, Mrs. Hooks stated that the Weequahic Jerseymen had received a grant of \$250 from the New Jersey Historical Commission. Mr. William Wright, Assistant Executive Director of the New Jersey Historical Commission congratulated the Jerseymen on winning this award.

As Mrs. Hooks concluded her report, Mrs. McMillon expressed the hope that we might eventually have a hundred young people working on Afro-American history.

Mrs. Hooks expressed the happiness of the Weequahic Jerseymen in being able to secure as the speaker of the day John Thomas, who had given the students help and encouragement during the past months.

Mrs. McMillon then presented John Thomas, who gave us a stimulating and delightful talk, which was addressed particularly to the young people and which enriched all of us. The central thought Mr. Thomas presented was of "Black Protest, a Continuum in American History", emphasized in the leaders of slave revolts, the Underground Railroad, the black abolitionists, the Harlem literary renaissance, the development of separate Afro-American churches and the contemporary period of confrontation.

Mr. Thomas made some very specific recommendations to the young people, briefly summarized here. They were to set initial objectives; "make a list of ten or twenty things you want to accomplish, set a time schedule; at the end of the

period try to appraise whether you have achieved your objectives. Consider whether you need to revise or change your objectives. "

Turning to his own generation, Mr. Thomas advised, "Whatever research you do, leave it open-ended; don't lock yourself in with respect to ideas or to content of your research. Continually evaluate what you are doing, what you have done."

Returning at the end to his theme of the involvement of young people in learning and research in Afro-American history, Mr. Thomas stated "your inputs can be, in the very involvement, the very making of history in New Jersey".

A tape recording was made of Mr. Thomas' speech, of which this is only the barest outline. It is available for play-back, and contains a richness of anecdote, of historical allusions, forceful personalities and thought provoking comment.

Mrs. McMillon then asked the young people for their comments. Gail Rodgers, Vice-President of the Weequahic Jerseymen, commented on the exhibits prepared, brought and installed by the Jerseymen.

Attention was called to the other exhibits at the back of the auditorium. These consisted of exhibit material on local Afro-American history, largely newspaper clippings, programs, pictures, etc. brought by Mrs. Elizabeth Huston, a former teacher, and material in similar format borrowed from friends for exhibit by Miss Laura Frazier, a librarian.

Material obtained as a result of notes and leads given by Mrs. Richard P. Milburn, a former member of the Interracial Council, consisted of official reports and newspaper accounts of the campaign to open Newark City Hospital to practice by black physicians in which Mrs. Otto Hill took an active part. This material has been placed permanently in the New Jersey Historical Society library.

Mr. Smith, a new member from Montclair spoke of his interest in our committee and desire to work with it.

Mr. Jack Brown had prepared for exhibit charts derived from his studies of Newark directories and outstanding pictures of black persons in New Jersey history from the collections of the New Jersey Historical Society.

Summarizing, Mrs. McMillon again emphasized the following areas of research, black person in the labor force and labor movement, in government, in home and family life, in fraternal and other organizations. She referred to our tape recording of Mrs. Anna Monroe as the beginning of an oral history project. She emphasized the need to know and become familiar with resources for black history in the library and museum of the New Jersey Historical Society.

Finally special mention was made of Mrs. Hattie Coppock's accomplishments as a music educator and musician. Mrs. Coppock, a member of the New Jersey Historical Society, and of its Afro-American committee is celebrating her fiftieth year in the field of music. Her personal scrapbooks were on display with the other exhibits, a rich record of a full and productive life. Mrs. Coppock spoke briefly on some of her experiences and of her appointment to the National Music Committee. Mr. Thomas in his talk had called the attention of the young people to Mrs. Coppock's scrap books, and urged them to follow the example and leadership of persons like Mrs. Coppock who have excelled in their chosen fields.

The meeting closed with general discussion, conversation and a box luncheon for those who could remain.

Respectfully submitted,

Miriam Studley, Secretary

Meeting of Afro Amer. Cont. Committee 10/17/70

I 10 - Opening - Has Mrs. Day hand from
Sunday -
- Minutes - mailed? Comments,
additions & corrections
Remarks - Mr. Luning.

II Comments.
Membership
New Arts High group -
Mr. Thomas's speech.

III Committee Buzz sessions

IV Reports
Secretary -
- Policy - Mr. Caesar
- Arts - Mangum
- Home & Family
- Labour
- Government & Politics
- Education
- Society Information Progress
Mr. Brown -

Notes.

Dr. Rice

~~Dr.~~ Edwards Nina - Re History
Invite Mr. Owens
- Institute.